

Land & Property Services

Customer Charter

This booklet explains the work we do and sets out the standards we want to achieve. If you need this information in a different format or language, such as large print or in Irish or Ulster – Scots please contact:

The Customer Services Team

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56-66 Upper Queen Street

Belfast

BT1 6FD

Telephone: 028 90 543929

Fax: 028 90 543806

E-mail: customerservices@.lpsni.gov.uk

Introducing Land & Property Services

On 1 April 2008, a new Agency, Land & Property Services was formed to replace the former Valuation and Lands Agency (VLA) and Rate Collection Agency (RCA), Land Registers of Northern Ireland (LRNI) and Ordnance Survey of Northern Ireland (OSNI).

We are responsible for the following four main areas:

- Rating
- Valuations
- Registration
- Mapping

You can find more information about our work in this booklet and on our website at www.lpsni.gov.uk.

We are committed to:

- providing an excellent service to all of our customers; and
- working hard to improve our standards.

In this booklet we set out the standards and level of service that you can expect from us. Your suggestions and feedback can help us improve our service. Comment cards are available from all of our public offices, and there is a feedback section on our website at www.lpsni.gov.uk.

Land & Property Services

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1 What we do

We are responsible for the following.

- Valuing all domestic and non-domestic properties in Northern Ireland
- Maintaining valuation lists
- Carrying out general revaluations
- Providing a general valuation, estate-management and property-information service to government departments and the public sector in Northern Ireland
- Issuing rates bills for private domestic properties and non-domestic properties, such as shops, factories etc.
- Following up and processing payments for rates bills
- Inspecting vacant properties
- Processing refunds if someone has paid us too much
- Managing the Housing Benefit Scheme (for owner-occupiers) and the other rate-relief schemes (see www.helpwithratesni.gov.uk)
- Managing the Disabled Person's Allowance Scheme
- Maintaining the Title Register in Land Registry, the Statutory Charges Register and the Registry of Deeds and providing up to date, accurate land Information Services
- Supplying mapping information for Northern Ireland.
- Providing records and data about place and location.

2 Where we are

We have offices in the following cities and towns:

- Belfast;
- Londonderry;
- Ballymena;
- Omagh;
- Portadown;
- Bangor;
- Lisburn and
- Craigavon
- Enniskillen
- Ballymoney.

All of our public offices and facilities are open between 9.30am and 4.30pm, Monday to Thursday and 10am and 4.30pm on Fridays.

The contact details and addresses for all of our offices can be found at the end of this document or on our website www.lpsni.gov.uk

3 Our customer service standards

We will do the following.

- Provide a professional and equitable service.
- Be polite and treat you with respect.
- Deal with your enquiry quickly and efficiently, and to the highest professional standards.
- Treat all enquiries and any information you give us in confidence, and use it only as we are permitted to by law.
- Be open about how we run our services, who is in charge and whether or not we are meeting our targets. We will publish this information in our business plan, annual report and accounts. (You can see these at any of our offices, or get copies from the TSO Stationery Office, 16 Arthur Street, Belfast BT1.)
- Give you our name or work title when we speak to you by telephone, or when we write to you (by letter or email).
- Carry, and let you see, our official identification if we need to call at your home or business.
- Leave an official calling card giving our name and telephone number if we have not been able to contact you.

If you call to see us at our office we aim to do the following.

- See you within 10 minutes. If this is not possible because we are very busy, you should not have to wait for more than 20 minutes.
- Answer your questions in full. If we cannot do this we will arrange to telephone you, or write to you if you prefer within 10 working days, when we have investigated the matter fully.

If you write to us we will do the following.

- Answer your questions within 10 working days.
- If we need longer to deal with your enquiry, we will let you know as soon as possible and when you can expect our full reply in writing.
- Deal with your letters or e-mails that require us to change our records within 10 working days and where appropriate, issue you with an amended rates bill within 5 working days.

If you telephone us we will do the following.

- Answer your call within 20 seconds.
- If the first person you speak to cannot deal with your enquiry in full, they will pass you on to someone who can.

- If we can't help you the same day, we will explain why and tell you when you can expect our response within 1 working day.

If you have special needs

We are fully committed to helping all our customers. All of our public offices have access for people with disabilities and a loop hearing system.

- If you have a hearing difficulty, please tell us so that we can make arrangements to suit your needs.
- If you have a sight difficulty we will provide information and communicate with you in a format you are able to use eg large print or braille. If you let us know the format you prefer we will use that particular format to communicate with you.
- If you would prefer us to visit you at home because you have special needs, please let us know and we will arrange to visit you at a convenient time.

If English is not your first language

- If you write to us in the language you prefer we will write back to you in the same language.
- If you would like to talk to us in the language you prefer we can arrange for a translator.

4 Other standards of service

Collecting rates

- We will offer you different ways to pay your rates. You can pay your rates by direct debit and by standing order, in instalments or in a single payment. While cash receipting facilities no longer exist in local rates offices, you can still you can still pay by cash, cheque, debit card or postal order at a local post office; at a bank or building society or by cash or debit card in any store displaying the Payzone network logo, (more than 800 in NI) by instalments and in a single payment. If we are informed or discover that you have made an overpayment, we will process your refund within 14 working days.

Dealing with applications for assistance with paying your rates

If you own your house, and are in receipt of benefits, you may be entitled to assistance with your rates through Housing Benefit or Rate Relief.

- We will process 98% of Housing Benefit and other applications for rate relief without any mistakes, and process applications where we don't need any further information from you, within 14 working days.
- We will explain how we have assessed your Housing Benefit within 10 working days of you asking.

If you are not happy with how we have dealt with your application and wish to appeal your decision, a separate process exists. You can find more details in our leaflet HBA1 which is available on our website www.lpsni.gov.uk . You can also get one from any of our offices or by contacting our Housing Benefit Central Unit on freephone 0800 5877477.

NB. If you rent your property and wish to claim Housing Benefit, you should contact your local NIHE office.

Inspecting vacant properties

- We aim to inspect all vacant properties twice every year.
- We will update our records in line with these inspections and issue a rates demand (where this applies) within ten days of the inspection.

Rating valuations

We need to carry out a new valuation when:

- a property (whether domestic or non-domestic), is built; and
- an existing property is altered, or it is used for a different purpose.

We will carry out a valuation when asked to do so by the local building control authority, any other public organization, the owner of the property, the tenant, the person responsible for paying the rates or a member of the public.

If you ask for a valuation we aim to carry out the valuation within three months of the request, but if this is not possible, we will write to you explaining the delay and that we will carry out the valuation within a further three months.

When an assessment has been carried out, the valuer issues a certificate of revision, detailing the valuation. A copy is sent to the owner / occupier and a copy sent to rating service to allow a rate demand to be issued. LPS will process all certificates of revision within six weeks of receiving them.

If you are not satisfied with how we have dealt with your application and wish to appeal the decision, a separate process exists, see details on our website www.lpsni.gov.uk or contact any local LPS Valuation office. Contact details can be found at the end of this document.

Inspecting your property

- If we need to inspect your property for valuation or mapping purposes, experienced staff from the Agency will carry out the inspection.

If we need to inspect the inside of your property we will make an appointment that's convenient for you and carry, and show you, our official identity card.

When we have finished we will send you or the owner the following:

- The District Valuer's certificate setting out the valuation and the reasons for any change along with information on how you can get an explanation of the valuation and how you can appeal against it.
- We will then issue a new rate bill if necessary. We aim to do this within 10 working days of receiving the valuation certificate.

Registration

The purpose of Registration Service is to maintain the three registers of land interests in Northern Ireland, namely: Land Registry, Registry of Deeds, and Statutory Charges Registry:

Through the maintenance of the three Registers we: -

- guarantee the validity of title to registered land;
- protect the priority of conveyancing transactions for unregistered properties;
- supply fast, accurate, reliable and cost-effective information about ownership and other rights affecting land; and
- provide an inexpensive judicial procedure for resolving disputes concerning registered land.

With the provision of all necessary resources, we aim to achieve the following average processing times for registration of regular dealings of whole and regular Compulsory First Registrations (CFR) –

- | | |
|---------------------------------|-----------------|
| • Land Registry | 20 Working Days |
| • Registry of Deeds | 6 Working Days |
| • Statutory Charges Registry | 15 Working Days |
| • Compulsory First Registration | 60 working days |
| • Land Information Services | 4 working days |

(These times apply to a single complete title where the application is in order and we do not need to obtain further information from the applicant or notify interested parties.)

The information held in Land Registers is vital for the conveyancing and property market in Northern Ireland and provides an accurate and up to date record of all legal interests in land.

The Land Register also provides owners with a government guarantee of title.

Mapping

The purpose of Mapping Service is to supply mapping information for Northern Ireland and to provide records and data about place and location. This provides a unique record of our landscape.

Our work is used in support of the Government to provide services that citizens and communities require.

Our information is supplied under license to many customers and organisations in support of their operations, commercial and otherwise.

Our customers include government departments, the public and private sector, emergency services, tourists and solicitors.

We aim to:

- Complete map update requests of 10 survey units or more within six months of receipt.
- Maintain a high level of surveyed residential properties within our database.
- Complete Agreements/Contracts within 20 working days.

Licensing Complaints (In respect of mapping only)

If your complaint is specific to a Licensing decision and all internal processes have been exhausted you can contact:

By letter:

Office of Public Sector Information
Standards Division
Room 1.35
Admiralty Arch
North Side
London
SW1A 2WH

By phone:

020 7276 5215

By fax:

020 7276 5207

By E-mail:

hmsostandards@cabinet-office.x.gsi.gov.uk

Working together

You can help us to provide a good service in a number of ways.

- When we ask you for any information needed to deal with your affairs, please give us that information on time.
- Make sure the information you give us is accurate.
- Inform us about any changes to your circumstances as soon as possible.
- If we make a mistake, tell us quickly to enable us to rectify the matter.

5 Our performance

We publish details of how we have performed against our main targets in our annual report. A copy of this is available:

- at any of our offices, if you ask us; or
- on our website at www.lpsni.gov.uk .

This is also available to purchase at The Stationery Office.

6 If things go wrong

If you are not satisfied with the standard of service we give you, a separate complaints procedure exists and details can be found on our website www.lpsni.gov.uk or in any of our offices.

7 Consulting you

We believe it is important to ask you about the standard of service we provide, and the kind of changes we can make to ensure our service to you improves.

- We carry out regular customer service surveys, and we look at and act on the information we receive.
- If you visit our offices and we ask you to fill in a comment card, please take this opportunity to give us your views on how we have treated you.
- We also contact customers by telephone to ask for their comments about our service
- You can give us feedback through our website at www.lpsni.gov.uk
- We publish the results of our customer service surveys in our annual report. You can see this at any of our offices if you ask us, or on our website at www.lpsni.gov.uk

8 Data Protection

Occasionally we may pass personal information to other organisations but only when we are required to do so under legislation or when the disclosure complies with the Data Protection Act 1998.

9 Improving our service

We want to provide a high-quality, effective and efficient service to meet the needs of all our customers. If you have any suggestions on how we could improve our service, please let us know. We will acknowledge all your suggestions.

Write to –

Mr John Wilkinson
The Chief Executive,
Land & Property Services
Queens Court
56-66 Upper Queen Street
Belfast
BT1 6FD.

